

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CPR-01

A-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SCA-01 PPT-01

VO-03 /055 W

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R 070938Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3624

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 02112

E.O. WBQYTWC GDS

TAGS: HU, PFOR, CGEN, PINS

SUBJ: ELIMINATION OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

REF: BUDAPEST 2092

1. DURING JULY 3 MEETING AT FONOFF ON ANOTHER SUBJECT, DEPFONMIN NAGY SAID HE NOW UNDERSTOOD THAT USG OFFER TO ELIMINATE "CLOSED AREAS" IN THE TWO COUNTRIES DID NOT EXTEND TO THE ELIMINATION OF RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY/EXIT POINTS BUT THAT WASHINGTON IS STUDYING LATTER QUESTION. MCAULIFFE ASSENTED, ADDING THAT HE HAS AUTHORITY IF THE GOH AGREES TO DO AWAY WITH CLOSED AREA RESTRICTIONS AT ONCE. EXISTING TRAVEL BAN DOES NOT IMPEDE OPERATIONS OF EMBASSY BUDAPEST, BUT REMOVAL OF BAN WOULD SYMBOLIZE STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS AND FURTHER SMALL STEP TOWARD NORMALCY. NAGY IMMEDIATELY REJOINED THAT NEITHER CLOSED AREAS NOR LIMITED EXIT/ENTRY POINTS IMPINGE IN ANY WAY ON OPERATIONS OF HUNGARIAN EMBASSY WASHINGTON AND THAT BOTH SETS OF RESTRICTIONS ARE ARCHAIC REMNANTS OF BYGONE ERA. HE ASKED HOW LONG IT MIGHT TAKE TO RESOLVE ENTRY/EXIT POINTS ISSUE IN WASHINGTON.

MCAULIFFE SAID HE HAD NO IDEA: IT MIGHT BE A MATTER OF WEEKS, MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS. NAGY EXPRESSED SURPRISE, PAUSED, AND THEN INQUIRED WHETHER RESTRICTIONS ON EXIT/ENTRY POINTS STILL IN EFFECT WITH RESPECT TO POLAND. MCAULIFFE

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SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THEY ARE. NAGY NODDED AND INQUIRED

ABOUT ROMANIA. MCAULIFFE SAID HE WAS NOT CERTAIN BUT HE BELIEVED THE RESTRICTIONS ARE STILL IN EFFECT.

2. IN AN APPARENT BURST OF FRANKNESS, NAGY THEN SAID THAT, IF "CLOSED ZONES" WERE ABOLISHED, HE WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY EXPLAINING TO HUNGARIAN POLICE AND BORDER AUTHORITIES THAT AMERICAN OFFICIALS ARE HENCEFORTH PERMITTED TO ADVANCE AS FAR AS THE BARRIER AND GAZE ACROSS THE FRONTIER, BUT NOT TO CROSS THE BOUNDARY. IF THEY PRESS AND ASK WHY HUNGARY IS CONTINUING TO MAINTAIN SUCH A "STUPID RESTRICTION", HE MIGHT FIND HIMSELF OBLIGED TO SAY BECAUSE THE AMERICANS ARE DOING IT -- AND HE HONESTLY DID NOT KNOW WHY THE AMERICANS WERE UNWILLING TO LIFT THE BAN WHEN NO SUCH RESTRICTION APPLIES TO THE HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR OR TO HUNGARIANS TRAVELING ON REGULAR PASSPORTS. FINALLY HE SAID HE HAD A BETTER APPRECIATION OF THE ISSUE AND THAT HE WOULD EXPLORE THE WHOLE QUESTION FURTHER WITH OTHER AUTHORITIES IN BUDAPEST. MCAULIFFE REMARKED THAT GRADUALISM WHILE NOT VERY SATISFYING TO THOSE WITH HOPES FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE DOES PREVENT STAGNATION.

3. COMMENT: NAGY NOW SAVORS A SUNDAE IN BUDAPEST BEFORE SIMILAR SERVINGS IN WARSAW AND BUCHAREST; BUT ANY DESSERT IS BETTER THAN NONE, AND THE VANILLA ICE CREAM IS TEMPTING.

MCAULIFFE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, TRAVEL CONTROLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUDAPE02112
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750233-0935
From: BUDAPEST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750778/aaaacsaw.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BUDAPEST 2092
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELIMINATION OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS
TAGS: PFOR, CGEN, PINS, HU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006